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1918



Verse

1914 - 1918



Gregory Scott Robbins

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Verse

1914 = 1918



Gregory Scott Robbins

Lovingly Dedicated
To My Parents

Without whose inspiration and encouragement
this little book could not have been.

Co. 7 N Cal 2.17.

*The bird-folk gather in the trees,
Piping their ancient melodies—
And so shall I, a mortal, sing
Of youth and love's awakening,
And all the magic of the spring.*

*The little creeks go leaping high,
Chatting as in the days gone by—
And as I heed, with bated breath
I shall weave songs of life and death,
Striving to tell what the wild creeks saith.*

July 30, 1917.

FOREWORD.



OF late years there has been a renaissance in the realm of poetic art. Volume after volume has been taken up by an eager public, whose poetic sense has been educated to the best poetry. To such cultivated readers, this little book will have its appeal, especially when it is known that the author is barely out of his teens. Many of these poems were written three and four years ago, when he was but sixteen years of age.

Of the poems themselves, much might be said. Their smooth rhythm, lyrical finish, depth and delicacy of feeling, are sure to impress the thinking reader with their value.

It is interesting to note, in regard to metrical construction, his frequent use of the four-foot rhyming couplet, particularly in the more recent poems. This couplet is often employed as a refrain, and is very effective at the end of a poem or stanza.

The author is a strong advocate of the epigrammatic style, and has mastered the intricacies of the short poem—the use of a few words to produce a mental picture or a spiritual emotion. This may be explained by the author's belief that poetry should be the "concentrated essence of expression."

The themes are varied. The spirit of protest against the evils of society, the devouring greed of Mammon, the spirit of defiance to tyranny, and undaunted hope in the ultimate triumph of Right and Love... ideals that are rapidly changing this world into a better place, find a strong call in the poet's soul. However, the pang of "blighted loves and hopes deferred," is his most favorite theme. With passionate emotion he sings it over and over again, rending the very heart of

the reader. Modern poetry has influenced him greatly, resulting in his creation of a beautiful style of Vers Libre, the "Paragraph." Music has, however, been the greatest influence in his life, and in this connection, it might be interesting to note that one of his latest poems, "Emptiness," was inspired by "Legend," a piano composition of his brother Samuel Robbins.

The author, as all other men, is subject to conflicting emotions, and what may often appear contradictory, is in reality the feelings and moods experienced on various occasions....the universal soul expressing itself through the medium of the poet's art.

Thus, in short, a few of the most salient features of Gregory Robbins' poems have been presented. It is my hope, as a sincere friend of Poetry, that the worth of these poems may be recognized, so that the author may be spurred on to greater things by that strength which comes from recognition.

MICHAEL LUTSKY.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

February 9, 1918.

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THE POET.

"We will not hear your songs again,
Because you sing of grief and pain."
And so they bade the poet cease
Because he would not bring them peace.

They bade the poet sing no more
Unless he chose a different score.
They said, "If you are feeling sad,
Just make-believe that you are glad:
For all your songs, you must confess,
Are pessimistic and depress;
So if you've songs to sing, make sure
They're made of stuff that will endure."
(As if a poet chose his ware
Like country-girl at country-fair!)

No choice of theme or thought have we
Who follow out divine decree—
The poet sings, but has no choice:
'Tis God Himself directs his voice.

November 17, 1917.

TO POETRY.

When day is forged in fire
And cool winds stir the dew,
I feel the old desire
That leaps at thought of you.

Time has not strength to part
The bonds between us two:
Our tryst is in the heart—
My thought intent with you.

January 13, 1915.

TO POETS.

O Poets cease
This adulation of fair Greece!
Song after song dwells on the time-worn theme,
And all their numbers seem
Reiteration of some former rhyme.
They never reach to heights sublime
Who echo to a master's voice.
Is there no better choice—
Is there no fresher Beauty yet unveiled?
O strike with all the strength of the assailed
And prove you have a higher song to sing—
One that will ring
Into the heart of man. Then you will hear
The plaudits loud and clear,
And realize my plea was not in vain,
The while you hear the clapping hands again,
And know your song will last throughout all time:
Not be discounted as a rhyme
Penned by some imitating worshipper of Greece!

January 12, 1915.

THE DREAMER.

He who has felt the fires of poetry
Burn with a flame unquenchable and sweep
Into his heart with passionate desire,
Has this one solace for his hungered soul:
He has, at least, felt all that others feel—
Their grief, their gladness. And the bitter pang
That comes to seekers of the infinite,
Is cleansed in that sweet sadness sought by all
Who love to dream their dreams in solitude.

November 28, 1914.

TO THE MUSE.

Thee have I worshipped overlong?
I have not yet been granted song
To rouse mankind. My soul has soared
Into the heavens for its reward
And found no token in the height
Bespeaking a diviner sight...
Speak, answer me, lest my heart break.
...Silence. No answer doth it make.

Make answer thou, ere Hope be gone!

The answer comes: "Plod on, plod on!
The Night must pass, ere come the Dawn!"

December 23, 1917.

IN THE COUNTRY.

Come, all ye callous worshippers of gold,
And glance upon the beauty of the sky...
You will forget your lust and greed, think I,
When Nature's vernal prescience you behold.
Is there not magic in the distant hills,
Is there not wonderment and glad surprise,
Illimitable hope and gay surmise,
In each pulsation of the mountain rills?

One day I came here from the city's heat,
Worn with the ceaseless strivings of its life—
Intent on resting from its endless strife,
Filled with heart-hunger for the old retreat...
And when I felt its quietude again,
I grieved for my less fortunate fellow-men.

February, 1915.

UNREST.

Dawn gleams upon my window-sill,
Comes noon, a rosy red;
The sun leaps down the distant hill—
Dusk, and the day is dead.
And in my heart both day and night—
Something I can not read aright.

The little stars come creeping out,
Smiling maliciously—
And for a while they heal my doubt
And all that troubles me:
But O I know not: am I sad—
Happy or tearful, sane or mad? . . .

Yet this I know: both dusk and dawn,
Something I dare not think upon.

April-August 2, 1917.

If the world thee dismay,
 Be of good heart:
Thou hast thy part to play
 In the world's mart;

And if the harsh earth ask
 Too much of thee,
Smile—don the grinning mask—
 Lest they see.

August 9-10, 1917.

I hide my ills both day and night,
I would not have them dragged in sight—
And so I smile light-heartedly,
That none my many wounds may see;
For there are none would lose their sleep
Were I to bare my wounds, and weep.

Long years ago, in mute despair,
Humbled, I laid my sorrows bare;
For O I yearned for sympathy
And cheering words to comfort me;
But there were none to pause and heed
And soothe my spirit in its need.

For all had sorrows of their own
And dared to walk the path alone.

September 4-11, 1917.

SONG.

What if the song be hard to sing,
The task—to bear;
What if death shadow everything—
The good, the fair?
My heart will break its bonds and wing
Through sun-spaced air!

What if I heard the dance of death
Too near—too near?
The wild west wind some secret saith
That I must hear!
And, if the morrow still my breath,
Why should I fear?

January 11-13, 1916.

FOREBODING.

When there come murmurs from the depths of being,
That life might soon prove traitor to this body,
I cry out "Nay!..for hope is strong within me,
And death is impotent when youth so wills it!"

But voices strange, imperious, bid me hearken—
And as they whisper to me, wild, relentless,
Something of sorrow overcomes my spirit,
And youth and hope speed from me, unreturning.

Yet, though this be forewarning of the morrow,
Why need I fear?..The faring will be pleasant,
The shadows lessen as the Goal draws nearer,
The path well-trodden by below'd footsteps...

May 28, 1917.

FAITH

If in that moment when the mind is ravaged
And clouded by the last disease of body
My faith grow weak, and heaven seem dim and doubtful,
I shall recall my childhood and its yearnings:
The firm, sure instinct guiding through the shadows. .
The dear familiar promptings of the spirit.

May 29, 1917.

WAITING.

She sits by the withering fire,
She watches the embers burn ;
Her heart is aflame with desire :
But he never will return.

She sits by the desolate fire,
Heart gripped in the pang and pain
Of imperative desire—
But he will not come again.

The old grandfather clock
Cuckoos the end of day—
It rouses her like the shock
Of rain on a sun-lit way . . .

She may sit there till life is done,
And yearn for an opening door,
For the footstep of her son—
He will come to her no more !

November, 1917.

EMPTYNESS.

This is indeed the very room
She had before she went away.
The shades are down, and in the gloom
It does not look the same today.

The palms and many flowers tell
Of loving hands that cared for them;
For she had nurtured them so well,
And lingered long o'er leaf and stem...

Those happy happy hours are dead,
And yet, her dear and darling ways
Shall ever be remember'ed
Through all the weary round of days...

And so, out in the cold she sleeps,
Who never slept so late before.
The shades are down, the poor sun creeps
Exhausted to the swinging door...

Ah, I can still remember how
She crept into my arms, that are
Unutterably empty now—
For she has traveled very far.

The silence stifles me—if I
But whisper her beloved name,
The room may brighten bye and bye—
But it can never look the same.

Ah yes, this is the very floor
She danced upon, the other day—
But O, how can I love it more,
Since she—since She—has gone away!

January 20, 1918.

SONG.

When the last hour is come,
And the flesh no more can be—
God grant it be at home,
That my own may comfort me.

When the last hour is gone,
And my own are far from me—
God grant it be the Dawn
My waking eyes shall see.

1917.

Quatrains

1914—1917

I read it "Seek, and ye shall find" but O
Year after year I seek both high and low :
Yet find no faith—nor gleaming star in sight
To help me read this ancient world aright.

October 28-30, 1917.

Like birds my hopes went winging high
Into the utmost realms of sky:
But scarcely did the heights attain,
When down they fell to earth again.

1916.

"They haunt me so!" I cried,
And shut my eyes to poverty and sin.
God heard, and he replied:
"You thought to shut them out?.. You shut them in!"

1916.

If in your heart
Dwells any fear,
Glance at the stars . .
And God is near !

1915.

When Death shall call to thee,
Make haste, and go:
A better sphere awaits—
God wills it so.

1915.

PAGLIACCI.

He laughs, with ashes in his heart,
His humor and his wit impart
The magic of that frozen smile:
He dies a thousand deaths the while.

August 19-25, 1914.

PROGRESSION.

Man drills his work with steady hand and brain,
That he advance his progress and his gain;
And many the time when feverish and tired,
God came, and with new strength his soul inspired.

1914.

God gave each man a sovereign mind,
That he might rise above his kind;
And to all men a soul has given
That they might seek at last for heaven.

1914.

THE PRISON.

I passed the prison walls,
And glanced inside...
And thought: How many falls
Hope had here, ere it died!

September 1914.

SECRET.

From hill, from forest, from lake and stream,
This Secret of Life I took:
"You can make your life a Utopian dream,
If you make it an open Book!"

1915.

SPRING.

A wisp of grass above the snow,
A solitary leaf upon the tree—
A hesitating chirp, and lo,
Life's great unutterable mystery!

1914.

THE EVENING STAR.

A flaming spark that dances on the eye—

A diamond, tremulous and fair. .

O Evening Star, what Spirit of the sky
Placed you supreme in power there?

October 8, 1914.

FORGET-ME-NOTS.

A fire-brand in the heart,
 A dripping rain of May—
A sea of faces bobbing up and down,
 At death of day.

A blood-red glimmer on the hill,
 A sun-lit lake that dances far away—
A ghostly wind that quiets, and is still,
 And dies the death of day. .

And in my heart a memory that stirs,
 Sweet with the subtle magic of old thoughts:
The thrill of childish voices, and of hers—
 A wreath of roses, and forget-me-nots. . . .

O sacred Memory,
 Ere sun is set,
Let me dream on with thee—
 And nevermore forget.

January, 16, 1915.

"IF A SONG COULD RIGHT THE WORLD'S WRONG."

O if a song
Could right the world's wrong,
What a song I should sing!
It should not be of birds, nor spring,
Nor any such weak visioning.
Nor should it heed the call
Of war's wild madrigal.

O if a song
Could right the world's wrong,
What a song I should sing!
The world should have awakening,
Peace triumph over everything,
Love reign, thrice-crowned, supreme,
Man realize his dream.
(If a song
Could right the world's wrong!)

O if a song
Could right the world's wrong,
What a song I should sing!
Earth should not harbor prince nor king,
Nor money-masters havoc bring—
And all the bleeding earth
Have glorious re-birth!

1917.

TO A BIRD, CAUGHT IN A STORM

A scratch upon my window-pane,
A stirring note of young distress;
A blinding flash—a torrent of rain—
A vision of soft loveliness.
O bird caught in the storm at night,
Why do you tremble at the light?

Rest, bird, in peace. God sent you here;
Smooth out your wings, and sing for me;
Of storm or rain you need not fear,
Dear harbinger of mystery!
Can you not see that Heaven sent
You to be my sweet sacrament?

And guided by God's hand, you came
To this lone house, on this lone hill;
And like His envoy, you proclaim
His glory in your passionate trill.
A thrill of lyric music wells...
Dream-like the story that it tells!...

Dear bird, how can I truly know
If aught has happened to your mate?
Else, why your song so weird and low
As if o'ercome by some cruel fate?...
Dear bird, arise! why droop your head?—
Your song has ceased!.. poor softling!.. dead!

Ah, sheltered in His grace, you came
To sing of greater things that I
Dare to suggest. What mighty flame
Burst from your heart! what mighty cry!
What song there staggered from your throat!
What wealth terrestrial in that note!

August 19-25, 1914.

TO A SWALLOW AT NIGHT.

How swiftly gone from earthly sight,
O swallow passing in the night!
Like some diviner of the spring
You burst upon us, wing on wing.
Now prithee tell me, little bird,
Of blighted loves, of hopes deferred.

O strangest to the startled sight,
A swallow passing in the night!
A whirl of wings, a sudden cry,
And down you flutter from the sky!
Before one summons breath to speak,
Away you're gone—new lands to seek!

Yours is the power to journey high
Into God's vast eternal sky,
To pause amidst your flight, and float
With outspread wings, and piercing note...
Ah, tell me your immortal song,
That I may join the happy throng!

Yours is the power that grants to me
Imagination's sanctity:
And when at night you swoop and curve,
And float, and fall, and swiftly swerve—
Ah, then pain clutches at my throat,
And I long for your God-gifted note.

Yet something more than song or sight
Bids me to watch you in your flight:
For you hold converse, near and far,
With mortal and with evening star!
And many the time I would my soul
Might gain as swiftly the shining Goal!

August 19-25, 1914.

THE HORDES OF HATE.

The hordes of hate crowd close around,
At times they force me to the ground;
With hideous scorn and mockery
They rend the very heart of me:
Yet though this body faint or fall,
They shall not conquer. Not at all!

They hem me in on every side,
With gibe and taunt they wound my pride;
No matter where my eyes I turn,
Their tents are set, their camp-fires burn.
Yet though this body faint or fall,
They shall not conquer. Not at all!

The hordes of hate are round me still,
Yet shall not bend me to their will.
The hordes of hate are fierce to see—
Yet shall not gain the mastery.
For though this body faint or fall,
They shall not conquer. .not at all:

This mind, this soul, shall battle on,
Nor weep because the flesh is gone!

August 21, 1916

LOSS.

Shyly the young sun gleams,
 Gilding my door;
Gilding the summer streams—
 The sea, and the shore...

Thus her love, ere it waned—
 Gilding my door:
But the sun went down...and it rained—
 And she loved no more.

September 8, 1916.

MY BOOKS AND I.

I choose my books with subtle care,
Fashioned so strongly and so fair:
Their souls I know, yet their bodies must
Withstand, with mine, the call to dust.
From dawn to dusk, from sun to shade,
My books and I together shall fade.

For these my books now young and strong,
Like me, shall not be tarrying long:
They must have faith and a courage high
To dare with me the realms of sky.
And like all things the gods have made,
My books and I together shall fade.

January, 1917.

TO A COLORED FRIEND.

If thou be black, I white,
What is't to me?
The day hath need of night—
And I, of thee.

Though the body bear a name,
The heart knows none;
For ours may beat the same—
Our souls be one.

March 14, 1917.

THE TRYSTING PLACE.

I have a little place
Where I betake myself,
That I might be alone
With earth and sun and stars.

There I may dream and dream,
And laugh and cry and talk,
Where none may see me thus
To call me quaint or queer.

For when I think of him—
And of the years between,
The old pang comes again,
And chokes my heart with tears.

There, with old memories,
Old sorrows, and old griefs,
I sit and dream alone. .
Until the day is dead.

February 1, 1915.

MEMORY.

Dusk, and a lonely hill,—
 Sun-down upon the sea;
A wind both harsh and shrill—
 A heart long lost to me.

A moon hung high in night—
 Star-beam upon the sea;
A dream of lost delight—
 With that old memory.

1915.

DEFIANCE.

Life, you have been a harsh master—
You have dealt with me severely:
You have scorned me, and thwarted me,
You have led me into false pathways—
You have robbed me of my Love—

Yet I say unto you:
Though your sting be as the sting of a thousand serpents,
And your tongue as a flame of fire that sears the soul—
Yea, though you take from me all I had set my heart upon,
I shall defy you.
For though you rob me of my all,
You cannot rob me of Hope!

February, 1915.

A WORKING GIRL

She seemed lost
Among the many there.
The multitude,
Business-bound and unseeing,
Ebbd up and down the street.

No one seemed to notice her
With that old shawl hung loosely about her shoulders;
Her face was ashen and pale,
And I knew she had suffered the pangs of hunger
More than once.

She was so frail—
Like a slim white butterfly,
Crushed and broken-hearted.
I longed to take her hand
As I would a sister,
And comfort her as best I could.

I knew she was unemployed
And sooner or later would succumb
To one of the many evils
That beset a working girl's path.
And O my heart ached for her—
But I could do nothing....

And she is only one of many
Who must walk aimlessly along life's byway,
Soliciting men's favor,
Or be broken in life's tempest....

Once again I glanced at the money-hunters
Hurrying up and down the street
With the yellow stain of gold upon their faces..
And I thought
That if there be a God in heaven
Some day
They will get their due.

February, 1915.

"I SAW YOU PLUCK WHITE DAISIES IN THE
FIELDS."

I saw you pluck white daisies in the fields,
You crooned a little folk-song you had learned
While in your mother's arms,
Across the seas.

My heart went out to you,
And yet I was silent—
Astonished, amazed,
At this thing that had cropped out so suddenly.

You never even noticed me,
So intent you were with your songs and daisies.
And I—
I could not believe
That I loved.

I watched you,
Silent, wistful;
Longing to speak.
But—somehow—
I could not....

I saw you again.. .
Long afterwards.
You were still in your fields,
Crooning the same old songs,
With your daisies.

But a little baby toddled by your side,
And a husky, bronzed young foreigner held it by the hand.
And I—
My heart filled with tears,
Thinking
Of the happiness
God had given you...

March, 1915.

THE ETERNAL BARRIER.

I said I would be strong
To walk the unbeaten Path—
That the stars of Even
Might not gleam upon the tall young grasses
Ere I had reached the Goal.

I ventured with a strong heart,
Eager for the fight,
Passionate to help my fellow-men
And extricate them from the fruits of their follies.

I set out when the sun was red and full of golden promise
And my heart was very light.
I felt the keen desires racing through my bosom—
The Northwest Wind and the icy blast of the Arctics
Could not deter me.

I was strong then, O God! in the light of my own wisdom
And the glorious trusting faith of childhood...
But too soon... O too soon!... my soul wearied of the strife,
And my strength was spent in the tide of battle...
Heart-sick and soul-hungered, I fling myself against the
Eternal Barrier,
But in vain...
The cold steel of ages does not yield to my feeble remon-
strances...
And I am wearied....

January, 1915.

•

Paragraphs

A verse-form suggested by Adelaide Crapsey's "cinquains."

My heart
Is a storehouse
Wherein I treasure
Dead thoughts and faces. .
Garnered
By the wayside.

December 25, 1917.

Your hand
Is Aladdin's lamp:
For when I touch it,
The towering genie
Love—
Works magic.

December 29-30, 1917.

Your voice
Is miraculous:
For at your singing,
Love leaps within me—
Tremulous,
Importunate.

December, 29-30, 1917.

Your face
Is saintly, sacred:
Like Mother Mary's,
When she bent over
The heaven-born
Infant.

December 31, 1917.

Forget
Your shining gold:
Do not the morning,
The flaming noon-tide,
The dusk—
Sing of Love?

December 30, 1917.

All have
Their god or gods!
Some worship Buddha,
And some, Mahomet:
And I—
Worship my Love.

December 31, 1917.

THE DEAD.

For them
The peace that passeth
All understanding :
For us—the weeping,
And pang
Of living.

December 31, 1917.

THE CYCLE.

Blithely
The cycle goes :
Birth and brief living,
Doom and disaster,
Death
And the sleeping.

December, 30, 1917.

Mother..
When the last call comes
In the cold trenches..
Your name I'll whisper—
Mother...
Dear mother!

December 25, 1917.

How strange
That on the morrow
I shall know laughter,
And sun and gladness . .
No more—
God! . . . no more !

December 25, 1917.

Because . .
Something within
Cries in the shadows
Shrouding my spirit,
I know
I must leave thee.

December 25, 1917.

SEARCH.

The world
Is a dark dark place . .
Through which I wander
Wistful and lonely . . .
Seeking
For a Friend.

June 1, 1917.

ALONE.

A stranger, dreary and desolate,
I wander this earth alone;
Not a kindred soul to share my fate—
Not one..not one!

Soon must I travel the road, deserted,
Unutterably alone,
Nor any note that I departed—
Not one.. not one!.....

1916.

STRENGTH.

I see wherein my ways were wrong
In feeling lone. The world was made
Not for the weak but for the strong,
And each man's drama must be played.

And so it is with better grace
I turn from faithless friends and see
That single-handed, one may face
And conquer even destiny.

December 31, 1917.

THE EVENING WIND.

The Evening Wind goes shrieking past my door,
And shrills and whispers through the phantom trees;
With ghostly hands, brings back old memories,
Of olden days—of hope that lives no more..
Days that were golden in youth's paradise,
Hearts that were happy in their young delight;
Love, that transcendent, knew nor pang nor blight—
Sincerity that could not brook disguise..
O Evening Wind! I pray you come no more!
Enough that once I thought the earth was fair—
My heart, my soul, are heavy with despair
When in my soul's recesses you explore.
And thou, Unhappy One! would grudge me not
The poor forgetfulness that I had sought.

February, 1915.

BETTER THAN BIRD.

A nightingale to sing of love
 In woodland glade of flowers;
A grove where faeries lightly move
 In airy mystic bowers,
A phantom voice to speak aloud,
 A ghostly elf to hallow—
To see him ride a fleecy cloud—
 And wondering, to follow!
To ride upon a cloudy mist
And watch the faeries hold their tryst!

To catch the sun while yet asleep,
 To see him at his setting;
To dance upon the trembling stars,
 And soothe them in their fretting!
To journey through the misty air—
 To travel all unseeing:
To feel the cool wind on my cheek—
 To thrill and thrill my being.
How strange to rub my eyes and wake,
And see my image in the lake!

Or, journeying above the sea,
 To watch the waves go splashing—
To watch the frightened mermaids flee,
 Or haggard icebergs clashing.
To float above the base of rock
 The humans call a mountain—
Or hover over mist and spray
 Above some marble fountain!
To see the tree-tops, cold and bare
In frosty realms of frosty air!

To soar into enchanted skies,
 Peep in a flower's chalice;
And hear the screaming eagle's cries—
 Or haunt some dreamy palace.
Or, where the reeds and rushes rise,
 Beside the ebbing river,
Float back and forth and hear their sighs,
 Remembering the Giver...
O if one could have wings to fly
Like some swift swallow through the sky!

To flutter through the cold Northland
 Where winter winds are blowing,
Or wander on the stark sea-sand
 When sea-mist sprays a-snowing.
To hover over dale and hill
 Above some verdant valley,
And flutter where I like, at will—
 Or watch the rain-drops rally!..
But better, Love, than be a bird—
Hear your sweet laugh—your smallest word!

June, 1914.

THE SONG-BIRD SINGS OF SUMMER-LOVES.

The song-bird sings of summer-loves,
The sparrow chirps of spring;
The locusts buzz their ancient song,
The eagle flaps his wing.
But I must needs lie down and weep
And lull the sullen earth to sleep.

The noon-tide flame's a crimson-red,
The sky is bathed in blue;
A southern wind breathes through the grass,
And whisks the morning dew.
But O my heart is lone and chill
And all the glowing fields are still.

The night has fallen, and each star
Gleams through the evening haze:
The moon's arrayed in gown of white—
A semblance of old days.
But O the voice forever dear
My being shall no longer hear.

Beyond the skies, a star-disk wanes,
And from its burnt-out place,
Darts through the sky and disappears
In endless realms of space! . . .
Somewhere, my Love, beyond the blue
Of Heaven, shall I seek for you?

May, 1914.

THREE SEASONS.

I saw her in the summer-time,
 When earth was fair.
Her cheeks were pink with young delight—
 With coloring rare.

Long afterwards, when earth was white,
 I saw her there:
Her heart was heavy with the night—
 Of grief, and care....

I saw her, when the year had passed,
 With quiet eye:
Death triumphed over her at last—
 But Grief passed by.

February, 8, 1915.

ALOYCE.

Your love's a chain that holds me fast
Through storm-wracked mem'ries, gaunt and grey;
Your love has chained me to the past
Though years and years have sped away.
To you my dearest dreams belong—
To you, my dear, and only you;
But yesterday I heard a song
Of love and lovers, tried and true:
And O a memory returned
Of olden days, of your soft voice...
And once again within me burned
A love that murmured "Dear Aloyce!"

August 25, 1914.

REGRET.

A bird came by my door,
 And sang to me—
A voice I hear no more
 Called piteously;
A wind wailed on my roof,
 And shook the floor,
Cried: Do not hold aloof—
 Your love restore!.....

He would not depart,
 Hoping to win:
But I locked my heart,
 Nor let him in;
And when, too late,
 I opened the door,
He passed my gate
 And loved no more.

Now all my days I go
 Unloved, alone:
The only voice I know—
 The high wind's moan...
I shrank when Love came by,
 A courtier bold:
And now alone am I—
 Worn-out, and old.

1914.

LIVE WHILE YOU LIVE.

Live while you live
Laugh while you may—
Think seldom of death,
Be happy alway.
There is trouble enough
And burdens to bear
To fill the wide world
With grief, and with care..
Drink deep of sweet thoughts,
Of no one speak ill;
Be kindly and noble:
For such is God's will.

1914.

REMINISCENCE.

I saw you sitting on the grass—
A goddess, exquisite and fair;
And love came like an avalanche—
 Caught me, and made me care.

You smiled—and how it thrilled my heart!
You spoke—and made it thrill again—
You sang—And O the godly peace. .
 And O the wistful pain!

Wet-eyed you sang of love and death—
Of all the petty ills of day,—
Trembling, I drew you to my arms. . .
 And Earth seemed far away.

October, 1914.

SONNET.

I would I were a bird that I might soar
 Into the pathless spaces of the sky ;
 That I might see my kindred going by,
 And hear their songs of legendary lore.
I would I were some god that I might know
 The secret of the earth, and stars, and sky ;
 That I might see the Dryads startling by,
 And follow them, wherever they might go.
I would I were the soul of man that I
 Might share the passion in each human heart,
 That I might share the pang when lovers part—
 And that I knew the reason why men die.
But more than this: I would mine were the hand
To bring Good-will and Peace to every land.

1914.

THE OLD TOWN-CRY.

I hear the old town-cry
 Shrilling its time-worn song of toil
In this dim woodland glade,
 Past this wet leaf and soil.

O God! what times were they!
 Ah, now our hair is like the snow.
How we idled all the day—
 Those days of long ago!

Surely again that cry
 Rings through the summer festival—
A voice of olden days..
 The City's Call!

May, 1914.

FIRE-DREAMS.

He dreams about those olden days of his,
Of all his journeyings to distant lands,
Of his sea-farings over storm-tossed seas—
And of the whiteness of her hands.

He dreams of sunny Italy and Spain,
Of the grey quiet of Normandy's skies;
And yet, before them all, she looms again,—
And O the love-light in her eyes!

November 17, 1914.

O HEART OF MINE!

What shall we do, O Heart of mine,
 When Autumn browns the grass and trees;
When blood-red like the choicest wine,
 The crimson sun rests on the seas;
What shall we do when hillocks frown,
 And Winter's breath chills all who pass—
When like some haunted mist of down,
 The flaky snow lies on the grass;
What shall we do when cheeks grow pale,
 When withered hands, and withered face,
Disclose the fact that life is frail—
 That we have had our day of grace?
How shall we feel when death comes by:
 Shall trembling eyes divulge our fear?
Dear heart! God grant that you and I
 Go bravely, when the hour draws near.

1914.

THE MOON.

(As seen on two different occasions.)

A few grey rifts of ragged clouds
Along the stretch of pale blue sky;
Sunset—and through the moving shrouds—
The young moon sailing by!

A round white sky, a snow-capped hill,
A cool wind shrieking past at noon:
And in the centre, cold and still—
The pale and prescient moon!

October, 1914.

SORROW.

The night is spangled with the stars,
 Crowned by the slender moon,
And all the earth and air is filled
 With a haunting, ghostly tune.
It chides, it whispers, and it sprays,
 It dances to the shore :
It murmurs of my childhood days,
 Of years that are no more.
O call upon the seven seas,
Lest they bring back old memories !

A sudden wave attacks the shore,
 And slaps the shifting sands—
And O I see her face once more,
 And her dear slim white hands.
The dusky sky is clothed in gems,
 The evening passes on ;
But I can see the hollow stems
 Of Flowers of the Dawn !
O Panorama of the Mist,
Tell me where lovers hold their tryst !

Ah, now the airy skylark sings,
 And wheeling high, I see
A swallow fold his placid wings
 And circle down to me !
O all the mist is soft and wet
 And sprays through fragrant air ;
And though the noon is not here yet,
 The sun is everywhere
O Golden Priest, why go your round,
Knowing my daisy's in the ground ?

SONNET.

Ah, grieve not. Better your Belov'ed dead
And her last earthly thought a prayer for thee,
Than she should live, and love no more could be.
For that you once knew love, be comforted.
But I, who never knew such happiness,
Must struggle uncompanioned in the strife—
Alone upon the battlefields of life,
With never a kindred soul to cheer and bless.
You have been loved. Could I but say the same,
Heaven would open, and enrich the heart
That never in such happiness had part,
And now must ache for love that never came...
Ah, were I thou, my dearest thought would be
That once I loved, and love was given me.

February 25, 1917.

SONG OF THE ALASKAN TRAIL.

O the wind is still and the lane is still
 And a brown frog croaks in the mud;
The tree bows down to the voice of the rill,
 An apple comes down with a thud.
You can feel the thrill of the summer sky,
 And the red sun's gleam and glow,
And you know he's going west to die—
 That the stars might whisper "GO!"
And its O for the olden Trail again,
 Be still, my heart, be still.

O laugh and be merry this night of nights,
 For the time is come to go:
Its HO for the Trail and the old delights
 In the land of the Eskimo.
Alaska, my love, I can feel your throb
 And the wild Call sting again;
And the heart of me bursts with a mighty sob—
 The Call to the Land of Men!
And its O for the snow and the sledge again,
 And the Arctic's mighty thrill!

O shoulder the gun and the pack to-night,
 And say good-bye to the sun:
Its HO for the Trail and a strong man's fight
 When the long, long journey's done.
Alaska, my love, the cold winds bite,
 And the heart of me leaps to reply:
Its O for the olden Trail to-night,
 And to Oregon, good-bye!
Go swift, my heart, to the land of Men,
 And the keen wind's primal thrill!

December 26, 1914.

A CORRECTION.

(After reading the war-news)

“They go with fierce desire
Into the mire of red :
With heart and soul of fire
Undaunted by the dead—
With heart and soul of fire
Undaunted by the dead.”
(This is the thing I read—
This what the Kaiser said!)

“They go against desire
Into the mire of red :
With heart and soul of fire
In pity of the dead—
With heart and soul of fire
In pity of the dead.”
(This is the thing I said—
This how it should have read!)

1915.

CLASS POEM.

The time has come for us to part—
To battle in the world's wide mart;
Paths must be cut, and grain be sown,
But we must walk those paths alone.

Ah, some may heed the clarion cry
Of country, and go forth to die—
And, stricken by the lightning-rod
Of death, may rest beneath the sod
Too soon. Yet they shall have re-birth
In realms more beautiful than earth,
And they shall feel the hearty grip
Of an immortal fellowship.

But most of us shall know the strife
Upon the battlefields of life,
And business house, or shop, or mill,
May bend our energies at will,
Enslave our minds with mighty chain
Forged of the base desire of gain.

God make our footsteps straight and sure,
Heart, mind, and spirit chaste and pure,
That in these hours of sorest trial
We shall have strength for self-denial;
That nothing shall have power to swerve
Us from divine desire to serve,
That in this holy servitude
We bring about man's brotherhood—
That we may help a world to see
Man's God-directed destiny,
That love might rule the firmament
Triumphant and omnipotent.

Then Love shall lead us subtly on
To fields of a perpetual dawn,
And storm nor rain shall threaten round
Love's green eternal camping ground.

The time has come for us to part,
To battle in the world's wide mart:
And so, dear old Fifth Avenue High,
We leave thee now . . . good-bye, good-bye!

December 16, 1917.

TO M. L.

Aye, you have known the tragedies of life,
Caught in the bitter strife—
(Yet never did misfortune bend your soul
Bound to the ultimate Goal)
And you have strived through myriad ways of thought—
For knowledge ever sought—
(Yet never did misfortune rend apart
That noble steadfast heart)
Aye, you have known the pang and pain of Doubt—
Yet found the pathway out:
(Misfortune could not hope to cage you in,
When once you set to win!)

February 23, 1917.

DAN'S SOLILOQUY.

I asked the Reverend Father why
God let my poor gran'muvver die—
He said, "It is His will!"—but Oh
I s'pose he thinks I'm young to know.—
..H'm! well, I guess that mebbe so.

I asked him if I'd never see
My granny dear again, and he
Said, "Child, you have not understood:
You will in Heaven—if you're good."

I asked him how I'd find my way
To Heaven when I died—and say—
He up, an' took my hand, an' said,
"Who put such notions in your head!"

And when I asked my mama why
God let her poor dear mama die,
She turned so white, and whispered "Dan,
Now do be quiet, if you can!"....
..H'm! bet I'll know when I'm a man!

August 16, 1917.

TO—

(With apologies to the Romantic Poets!)

My heart knew gladness when your face
Filled it with your consuming grace—
My heart knew madness for an hour
When first it felt your subtle power—
For then it had no other choice
When held in thrall by glance, or voice;
But it shall now no longer thrill
To your compelling voice and will,
Since a more worthy one has brought
Your captivating wiles to naught!

August 25, 1917.

I DREAMT ABOUT MY LOVE

I dreamt about my Love
The other day, when I
Lay in a garden where
She often passes by.
I love my lady so
I cannot bear to see
Her footsteps archly go
So far away from me..

I dream my dream each night,
And seem to see her there,
My shadow of delight—
So beautiful and fair.
Ah, if she knew how I
Lost many a nightly sleep
To see her passing by,
To see those young eyes weep—

Perhaps she'd change her mind,
Grant me immortal's bliss,
And with sweet pout and kind,
Give me the longed-for kiss.
Then I would send a dart
With humble worship lit,
That would go through her heart—
And straightway fathom it!

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1915.

CREED.

Some say "Fear God!"...
I do not fear.
I could not love
Were I to fear.
And some, "Believe in Hell!"
Have said:
Of that they can not tell—
Till dead.

August, 1914.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

"We are here, and for what?" is the question we ask:
We are here for the best that is in us!
We are here for the good that this earth surely holds—
Therefore why let a rival thought win us?

We are here, and so what if at times all things bore us?
We are here—and surely for good!
If we'd stop only once to consider the facts,
We would see things are not understood.

Let us cheerily walk through the great span of years,
There is no time to sulk or to sorrow:
Let us strive at the task that is ours for today—
That there be a far better tomorrow.

For what good, tell me please, do we get out of life,
If we're going to "knock" and be cynics?
Come, raise up the banner of Reason and Light—
And down with the darkness that mimics!

And its often the case that we mutter and say,
"We are martyrs, and sadly mistreated!"
When the truth of the thing is we're utterly low—
When we cower and murmur "Defeated!"

Let no Doubt then assail you, nor stains mar your flag,
March bravely to Freedom, or Strife—
May your courage not fail you, nor fear more assail you—
We are here—for the Battle of Life!

February, 1914.

BOOKS VS. FRIENDS.

I left my books for friendship's sake—
I thought it best such bond to break;
But all my friendships came to grief
And left me lonely past belief.
So, undismayed, I turned from men,
And sought my good old books again!

July 18, 1917.

THE PHOToplay.

He walks the cold gray city streets,
About him throngs move left and right;
But what the sign he stops and greets—
What is't that makes his eyes so bright?

What brought that thrill upon his face—
What urged him to that boyish laugh?
What radiance filled him with new grace—
That bent old man, with the oaken staff?

His long gray beard, his snowy head,
His bent old back, his haggard eye—
His thoughtful glance—his solemn tread—
He must be dreaming of days gone by!

His thoughts are surely with the past!
For days of youth gleam in his eye;
Surely I saw his breath come fast
As all those years went flitting by.

But look—what is that in his hands? . .
A bright new coin he flashes, gay:
And see—how grand, erect, he stands—
Ho, once more young—to the Photoplay!

1914.

THE SERENADE.

ACT 1.

A dying sun in a peaceful sky—
And the city's still and dead.
A twang of a harp, and a lover's sigh—
Whilst his lady's overhead.

ACT 2.

A fling of the door, and a sudden smart
In the darkened eyes of our friend:
A broken harp, and a broken heart—
And the Serenade comes to an end!

(Curtain).

1914.

HALLOWE'EN.

The wind heaves to
And murmurs through
The darkling bowl of wavy blue.
And I hear a sigh
Deep-drawn nearby,
And I think of an owl's tu-whitt-tu-whoo.

What is that sound
That moans around
The cool wet air and the soggy ground?
A fearful moan—
A ghostly groan—
And a haggard Shape flits off with a bound!

O Shades of Bliss!
What ghoul is this
That sneaks with creepy tread and hiss!
" 'Tis Hallowe'en,
You've the phantom seen—
So snatch her now, and take your kiss!"

1914.

IN OLD CATHAY.

In old Cathay,
 Down by a dusky lane,
Two lovers paused,
 And spoke sweet words.

And what they said,
 (Thus hath the moon recorded)
Is not for us,
 Is not for us.

For what they said
 Deep from the hearts of them,
Flames in the soul—
 Trembles like stars.

For in the heart-beats
 Forged in the fire that made them,
Love caught them fast,
 Bound them together. . .

From springs of sunshine,
 Deep in the pools of gladness,
Love drinks therein
 And finds contentment.

Go wend your ways,
 You of the heavy-hearted—
Go find your Love,
 Wed, and be happy.

1914.

A LESSON IN ZOOLOGY.

Now children dear, the Lepidoptera
Are moths and butterflies;
Do not confuse them with Hemiptera,
Nor say they may be called Orthoptera—
'Twould surely be unwise!
Tell teacher they have scales and wings,
And flutter through the skies.

And, children dear, the Coleoptera
Are beetles, clad in mail;
Do not confuse them with Plectoptera
Nor glibly tell her they're the Diptera—
For she will surely "rail,"
But tell her how their wings are sheathed,
And then you will not fail.

Now, when she mentions the Libellula,
(They're dragon-flies, you know)
Don't tell her they're like the Arthropoda,
Nor guess they look "just like" Mammalia,
For she will scold you so!
Tell her there are two groups of them,
With eyes that gleam and glow.

And, children dear, the Hymenoptera
Are ants, and wasps, and bees;
Now do not tell her they're Amphibia,
Nor reckon they may be Reptilia,
For she will surely tease;
Just tell her they have four membranous wings,
And watch how she agrees!

October 14, 1917.



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